

Fort Schuyler,  
Throgs Neck, Bronx, Co.  
New York City.

HABS No. 4-30

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No. 4  
Southern New York State

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Wm. Dewey Foster, District Officer  
25 West 45th Street, New York City

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FORT SCHUYLER  
Throggs Neck, Bronx Borough, New York.

Owner: U. S. Government (Custody of U. S. Merchant Marine)

Date of Erection: 1833-1856

Builder: U. S. Government

Present Condition: The fort has long been abandoned as a strategic point in the coast defenses, but has been used at various times as headquarters for different detachments or encampments.

In the spring of 1834 the War Department entirely abandoned the Reservation on Throgg's Neck and the City of New York took over the western part of the land to develop as a park site while the U. S. Merchant Marine started alterations to the fort on the end of the peninsula as a Merchant Marine Naval Academy.

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction: Exterior masonry; rusticated coursed granite ashlar. Earth ramparts. Magazine walls, concrete. Foundations granite. Magazines and rampart vaults, brick. Floors: flagstone and wood plank. Cast iron balcony. Circular stairs: dressed granite lined with brick.

Other Existing Records: Drawings: U. S. Government Map "Q.M.G.O.", May 1912, revised July 11, 1930.

Written Records: Lossing, "Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution", p. 613. "Defence Reports Committee, New York". Knapp, "Defence of New York". "Coast Artillery Journal" (Vol. 68, pp. 427-447). U. S. Appropriations Committee (of the House), "Hearings before subcommittee in charge of the fortification appropriation bill 1906, 8, 9, 13, and 14". Stockton, "Speech on Harbor defences", May 11, 1852, in U. S. Senate. U. S. Engineer Bureau, "Revised report of the Board of Engineers on the defence of the Sea board", March 24, 1826. U. S. National Coast Defence Board, "Representative of the Board (Wm. H. Taft, Pres.)". U. S. Military Affairs Committee, "Report on permanent fortifications and sea-coast defences, April 23, 1862". U. S. House of Representatives, "Hearings on fortifications bill, 1916, etc.". Norton, "Letter on Fortifica-

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tion, Wash, 1858". Hammond, "Quaint and Historic forts in North America". U. S. "Report on fortification of ports and harbors, June 10, 1797". U. S. War Department, "Report from the Department of War on Harbor Fortifications, 1796". U. S. Committee on the State of the Fortifications of Harbors, "Report May 9, 1796". U. S. War Department, "Report from Secretary of War, 1840". Ferris, "Speech on Fortifications bill, July 17, 1841. U. S. War Department - Board on Fortifications "Report of the board on fortifications or other defences, 1885". U. S. Engineer Bureau, "Sea Coast Defences 1880-1885". U. S. Coast Artillery Office, "Annual Reports, 1901/2 to 1906/7". Totten, "Report on the subject of National Defence". Stevens, "Letter on harbor defence, in 1841, to Col. Totten". Nimmo, "Sea-coast defences of New York City". Griffin, "Our sea-coast defences". Goodrich, "Some points in Coast Defence". Colvin, "Coast Defence". Schulz, "Land defence of sea-coast fortifications". U. S. Fortifications, Board on - "Report".

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FORT SCHUYLER  
Throggs Neck, Bronx Borough, New York

Location and Date.

Fort Schuyler is located on the extreme eastern point of the Government Reservation on Throgg's Neck, in the Borough of the Bronx in New York City, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Westchester Square by Tremont Avenue and Fort Schuyler Road.

It is almost directly north across the mouth of Long Island Sound and the East River from Fort Totten which is situated on the north shore of Long Island. Thus located, these forts would control an approach to New York City and Harbor via Long Island Sound.

The land on which the Reservation is laid out was acquired by purchase July 26, 1826. Provision was made for ceding jurisdiction to the United States Government by an act of the N.Y. State Legislature passed March 31, 1815.

Originally the land on which the Reservation is laid out was separated from the main land by a swamp which was later filled in and a road constructed across this made land.

Work was begun on the Fort in 1833 and in a report on the military and Naval defenses of the U. S. in 1840 we find reference to the work being in progress at that time after an expenditure of \$450,000 with an additional \$290,000 required for completion. The fort was considered ready for occupancy in 1856.

Architectural Features.

The fort is of masonry construction, approximating the form of early French bastioned forts, enclosing a quadrangle or yard, with an entrance court and forecourt on the land side. All the exterior masonry is rusticated coursed granite ashlar.

The exterior walls vary from 5 to 6 feet in thickness of apparently solid masonry, which on the inside are dressed, and are punctuated at regular intervals by two tiers of gun ports.

There are three bastions projecting at the eastern corners of the fort toward Long Island Sound and so laid out that the entire exterior face of the fortification is covered by gun ports in adjacent or opposite walls.

On top of the fortifications are earth ramparts comprising the terreplein, parapet and exterior slopes and all this earth work

is covered with turf. At the present time it is difficult to determine what the levels of these ramparts were in many places, owing to their destruction throughout the years.

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At certain intervals along these ramparts are located magazines with one or two entrances which wind into a vaulted chamber in such a way that no shot can be fired directly into the chamber. These chambers are of concrete construction and were evidently used for ammunition storage for the guns which are mounted along the ramparts.

All these magazines and ramparts are supported on brick vaults which spring from granite piers regularly spaced. Underneath the ramparts are two tiers of gun emplacements - the first tier with a flagged floor and the second a three inch plank floor on 6 by 12 inch beams supported on masonry arches and wood trusses. Along the inside of the second tier was a cast-iron balcony or walk with a flag floor which is now destroyed, along with most of the second tier beams and flooring. These were reached by three circular masonry stairs towers located at each bastion angle. The tower at the southeast bastion continues up to the terreplein.

These stairs are of particularly excellent masonry construction of dressed coursed granite ashlar and lined with brick with each tread a solid piece of granite fitted into the wall and resting on the one below it with an iron rod extending through the core in the center.

The garrison is constructed entirely of dressed coursed granite ashlar with the exception of the face of the exterior wall on the forecourt which is rusticated.

The garrison was divided into rooms of varying sizes with two tiers to each room and fireplaces in all rooms. The flooring and beams are completely destroyed. In some places indications of plaster on walls and ceilings is evident.

Over these rooms are the brick vaults supporting the earth ramparts above, similar to the adjacent fortifications.

In the exterior wall of the garrison, facing the forecourt, are gun ports and rifle ports, while in the wall facing the quadrangle are openings for doors and windows which have been completely removed with no frames apparent.

A flagged balcony extends along the quadrangle side of the garrison at the second tier level, connected by stairs to the ground and the ramparts above, as well as the balcony along the second tier of the fortifications.

A sallyport, shut off at each end with heavy iron-studded wood doors passes thru the approximate center of the garrison and connects the quadrangle with the forecourt.

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The forecourt is accessible on the north and south thru entrance gates which evidently were closed by two sets of double doors in each gate, altho these doors are at present removed.

Access between the forecourt and entrance court was thru a fortified sallyport over which are earth ramparts, surmounted by magazines, extending along the west side of the forecourt, on which are several gun emplacements. This sallyport has a guard room extending its entire length on each side with rifle ports opening into the sallyport. Doors of iron-studded heavy wood close each end of the sallyport.

Under the ramparts at the southwest side of the forecourt is the old boiler room, in which are still two old wood burning boilers. Also under these ramparts are the prison and the dungeon, while on the ramparts over the prison stands a light-house which is said to be the third of a similar type to be erected here.

#### Historical Data.

Fort Schuyler evidently was never utilized to any important extent and in consequence there is little available history concerning it.

(From Description in 1897)

#### Fort Schuyler

"Throg's Neck is the peninsula reaching eastward at the place where Long Island Sound contracts into East River. It is (in 1897) the easternmost point of the city of New York. A narrow causeway finally leads across a stretch of marsh, and Fort Schuyler is at hand. The fortifications are only grassy mounds, with old smooth-bore guns forming picturesque foreground adjuncts to the sweet sea-pictures north and south. The officers' houses, the residences for two artillery companies, are in the interior, facing landward and sheltered from the winter gales by the ramparts.

"On this promontory of Throg's Neck, called by the Indians 'Quimshung', a settlement was established as early as 1642, by John Throgwarton, a Baptist, and thirty-five families, who had been driven from Massachusetts with Roger Williams, the patriarch of Rhode Island and the Providence plantations.....". (Rand, McNally & Co.'s Handy Guide to the Country Around New York, 1897, pp.26-27. In New York Public Library)

However, reference is made to it in the Report to the President by the Secretary of War on the Military and Naval Defenses of the U. S. Coast Defenses in the year 1840, wherein we read it was designed to garrison 1250 men and to have armaments as follows:

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48-42 pounders	19-8" Howitzers heavy
48-32 "	6-8" " light
70-24 "	2-13" mortars
8-18 "	7-10" " heavy
12-12 "	3-10" " light
6- field pieces	5-8" " "
70- carronades	2-16" stone mortars
	12 cohorns

or a total of 318 pieces of armament.

None of these are in place at present and it is impossible to determine how many were actually set up, although it is said that at one time it was completely armed.

From notes on a U. S. Government map of the reservation designated as "Q.M.G.O." May 1912, revised to July 11, 1930 we find the following comments, quoted in part:

"Post first occupied Jan. 17, 1861".  
"Garrison withdrawn Oct. 12, 1870".  
"Re-garrisoned June 28, 1877".

also:

"On November 17, 1916 the Secretary of War granted to the American Red Cross the use of the reservation and guard house and several store-houses, since demolished, for storage purposes."

In further research the following reports were discovered:

"War Department - Surgeon General's Office - Washington, December 5, 1870. Circular #4."

"A Report on Barracks and Hospitals with a Description of Military Posts."

Pages 41-42 inclusive - "Fort Schuyler, N. Y. Harbor. Report of Assistant Surgeon C. B. White, U.S.A".

"Fort Schuyler is situated upon Throgg's Point at the junction of the East River and Long Island Sound.

"Reservation purchased in 1826, work was begun on fort in 1833 and it was considered ready for armament in 1856. The neck of the peninsula was the site of the McDougall general hospital during the late war. The peninsula is a narrow strip of ground nearly a half mile wide with an average elevation above the water of 25 feet, including an area of 52 acres.

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"The Fort is on the outer end of the penninsula and is a regular casemated structure of GNEISS.

"The quarters for the troops are the finished and closed casemates upon the land side of the fort. The rooms are eight in number and in two tiers. The lower rooms measure 47 feet 6 inches by 18 feet and the upper ones 48 feet by 18 feet 6 inches, the height of each averaging about 13 feet. Each room has two large fireplaces, but to warm them properly in severe winter weather it was necessary to resort to stoves. Each room has three windows in the rear, two windows and a door in front and at the end of the room, over the windows and the doors an opening for ventilation 2 feet by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet closing with a shutter. The average air space per man is about 567 cubic feet. They are filled up with single bunks consisting of iron head and foot support with a wooden bottom.

"Within 30 feet of the quarters is a shed over a well and pump fitted up as a wash room for the use of the enlisted men. There is no bath room connected with the quarters, and in summer the men bathed in the sea. The privies for the men's use are in a flagged yard, enclosed from the parade, in front of and about 35 feet from the barracks. The kitchens and mess rooms are in wooden buildings outside the fort.

"Quarters for laundresses and married soldiers are in a one-story frame building near the mainland and divided into 24 rooms intended for 12 sets of quarters. The larger portion of the rooms available at this post for officers quarters are in the land side line of casements south of the main entrance. These casements, similar in size to those occupied by the men, have been plastered and divided by halls and partitions into rooms averaging  $16\frac{1}{2}$  by  $18\frac{1}{2}$  feet. A wide veranda communicating with the lower floor by iron stairways runs along the front of the second story. The lower floors are damp in summer. In front of the court yard is laid out garden plots with greensward and some trees. The sinks are in the front yard like those of the enlisted men. There are also four plastered rooms available for officers use in a one story brick tin roofed building near the government wharf.

"The quarters of the post surgeon are three small rooms and a kitchen in a temporary building near the hospital. There are no bath rooms connected with the officer's quarters as their water supply is by wooden carts and barrels.

"The guardhouse is in a casemate by the sallyport. The guard room measures 8 by 36 feet, the prison is  $28\frac{1}{2}$  by  $24\frac{1}{2}$ , and the height of each is 12 feet. Each room has a ventilating tube passing thru the masonry of the ceiling and they are sufficiently lighted and dry.

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"The water supply of the post is by wells. The quantity is ample and the quality usually good. The natural drainage is excellent. A sewer under the fort connected with a large reservoir which is filled at high tide, from which the water can be let off as required to flush the sinks etc.

"Company, officers' and hospital gardens are cultivated and produce a large quantity of vegetables.

"During the warm weather the men are encouraged to bathe frequently in the salt water and a convenient place is set apart for their use. There is no provision for bathing in the winter except when admitted to the hospital.

"The sanitary condition of the fort is good and no diseases can be said to prevail."

Military Reservations, etc.

Titles, Jurisdiction, etc.

Revised edition, 1910, by Lewis W. Call.

#### Fort Schuyler

The deed as follows:

1. Deed from Wm. Bayard et al dated July 26, 1826, conveying 52 acres of land.
2. Deed from Chas. H. Hammond and Thos. Boldon, makers in chancery, dated August 25, 1828, conveying said land.
3. Deed of release from H. LeRoy et al., guardians etc., dated November 14, 1826, conveying said tract.
4. Deed from H. LeRoy et al dated April 10, 1837, conveying right of way from West Chester to White Stone Ferry.
5. Deed from Geo. Edwards and wife et al dated April 8, 1837, conveying right of way from Westchester to White Stone Ferry.
6. Deed from Thos. H. Newbold dated April 10, 1837, conveying the right of way from Westchester to White Stone Ferry.

Written June 29, 1934, by

Justin D. Graves,  
145 East 52nd Street,  
New York City.

Edited April 23, 1935.

HABS National Headquarters.

*Revised 1936, H.C.F.*